

J.

TORRES

SCOTT

CHANTLER



STEREO

# Days Like This



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Written by

**J. Torres**

Illustrated by

**Scott Chantler**



book design by

**Keith Wood**

edited by

**Jamie S. Rich**



published by

**Joe Nozemack**

associate editing by

**James Lucas Jones**

Visit the author at [www.jtorresonline.com](http://www.jtorresonline.com).

Visit the illustrator at [www.scottchantler.com](http://www.scottchantler.com).



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**In loving memory of Renato Torres  
(1939-2001)**

**“To know him is to love him.”**

# CHAPTER 1

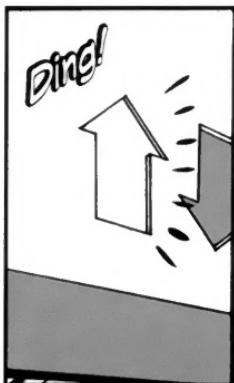
## “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?”



*"Central High auditorium. Rehearsing for the talent show."*









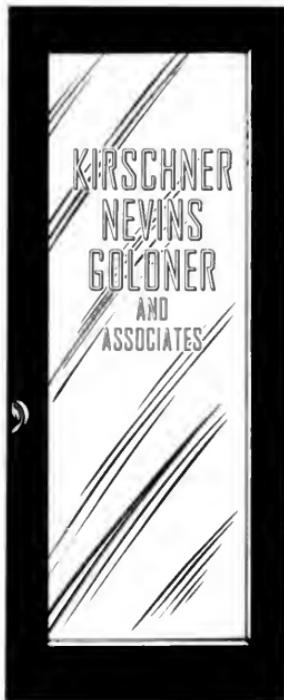






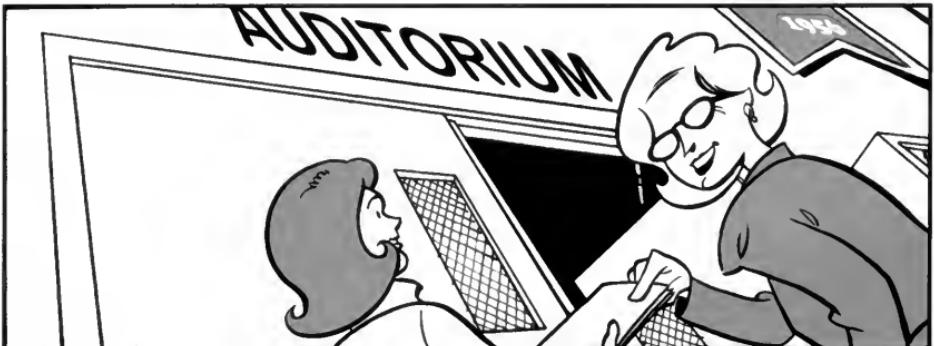




















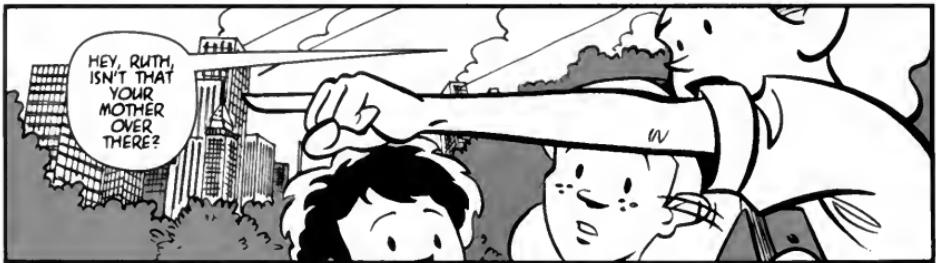












WE'RE GOING  
TO MAKE A  
RECORD!

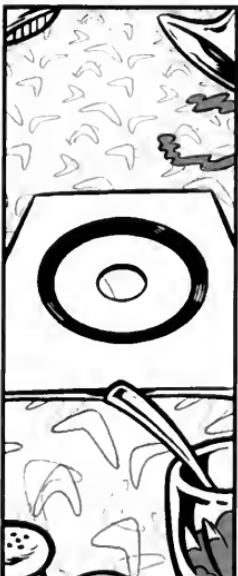


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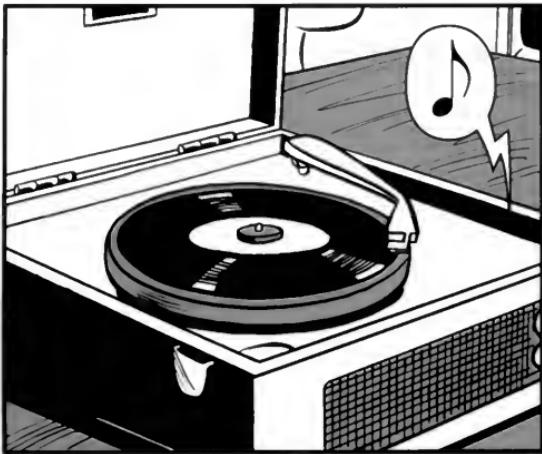
## “Dedicated to the One I Love”

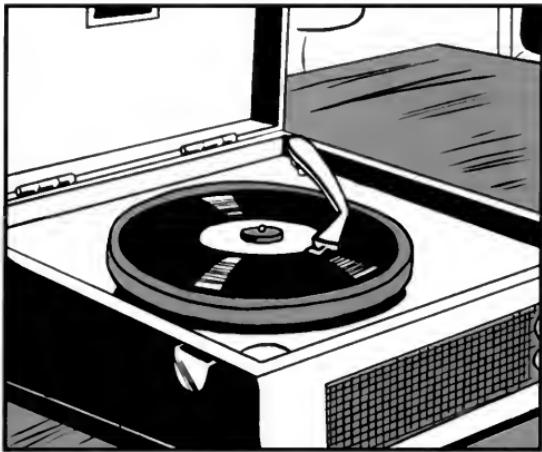


*“Harmony Plaza recording studio. Making a demonstration record.”*

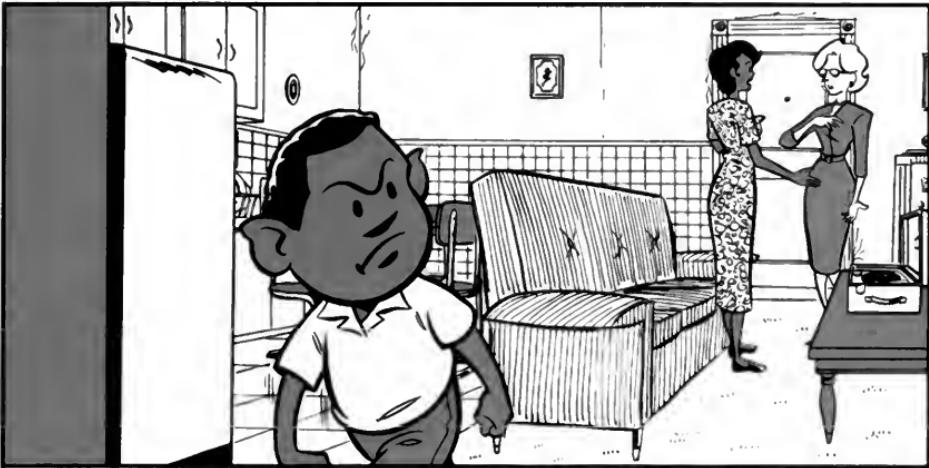
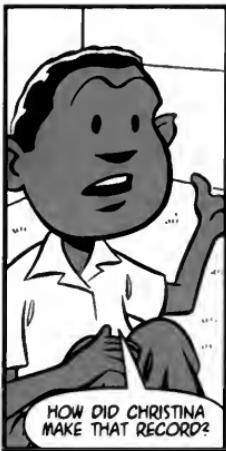
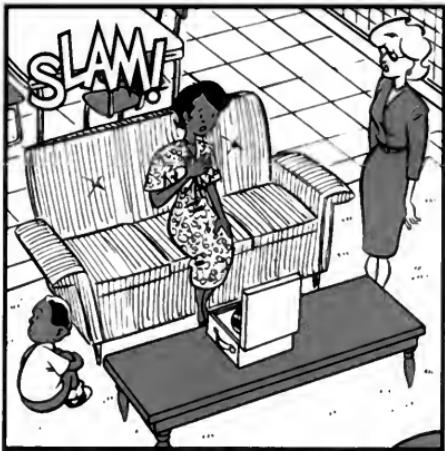


























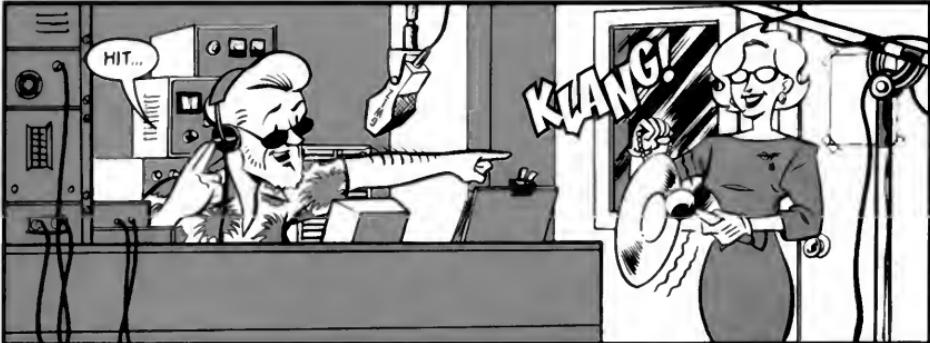






YOU'RE LISTENING  
TO STATION G-W-I-Z  
WITH WALLY THE WIZ, A  
WHIZ OF A WIZ IF EVER  
A WIZ THERE WAS! AND,  
GEE WHIZ, IT'S TIME ONCE  
AGAIN FOR...

GWIZ

















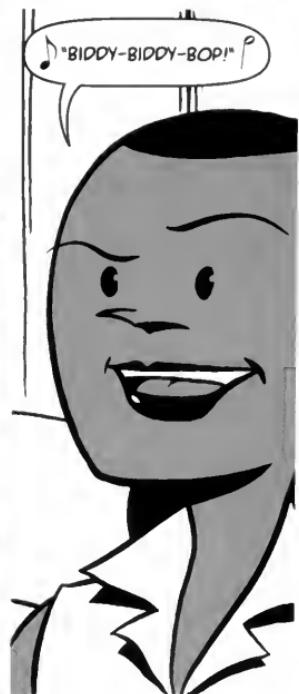
# CHAPTER 3

## "Tonight's The Night"

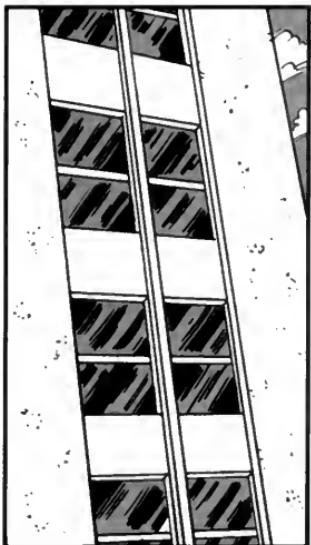


*"Passaic Fair. Getting ready to perform."*

















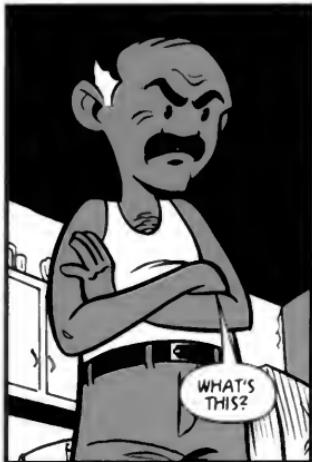












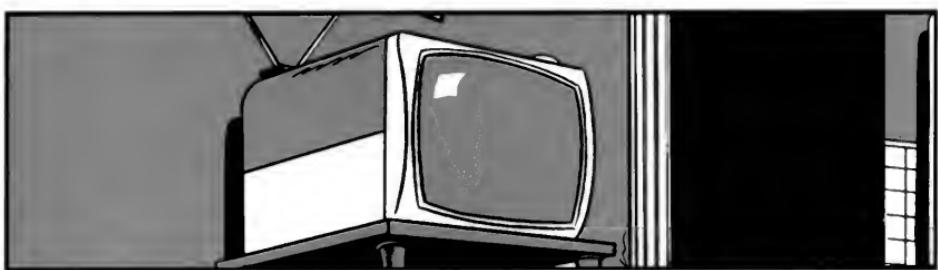




















# I HEAR A SYMPHONY...

## An afterword by Jamie S. Rich

When one considers the girl groups of the 1960s—vocal outfits like The Shirelles, The Chiffons, and The Ronettes—it's amazing to realize how cynical about pop music we've become.

Right now, we're in the death throes of the second generation of boy bands (at least in North America; in Europe, they never fully gave up the ghost to the tedium of early '90s earnestness). Modern groups like N\*Sync and the Backstreet Boys were greeted with distrusting ears and gripes about record companies putting them together and other people writing their songs. Plus, they were seen as a phenomenon suitable only for teenage girls. God forbid adults listen to them, and should a teenage boy wish to emulate Nick Carter, he'd likely be beat-up by a shirtless cad with his boxers showing that thinks he's DMX.

But back in the era of the Brill Building, when the three-minute pop song ruled the radio, there was no such grumbling. In fact, when some neophyte serious music fan extols the virtue of the latest off-key loser to score a record deal, praising him for recording his own material, I tend to remind said *High Fidelity*-wannabe that a lot of the revered records that came out of Motown were just as much the products of writers and producers as they were the performers, and The Beatles began as a covers band. Hell, even Jimi Hendrix had one of his biggest hits singing Bob Dylan. Writing your own material isn't all it's cracked up to be. That's how we end up with wankers like Jon Mayer or art school dropouts like The Flaming Lips. (I heard a gasp from the boy in the turtleneck in the back. He can't believe I would lump both of those acts into the same diss. Surely the Lips deserve a kicking with a completely different set of boots than Mayer, he believes.)

Groups were formed however groups were formed. Sometimes they were friends singing doo wop on a street corner, catching the ears of the right person. The Crystals, who had hits like "Da Doo Ron Ron" and "He's A Rebel," started off winning a high school talent show. The Shirelles, who brought us "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" and "Soilder Boy," used to sing in the hallways until a fellow student, whose mom happened to have a record label, heard them. Often, a vocal group was a mix-and-match batch of singers that might have been hanging around that day. Perhaps the greatest benefactor of good luck was solo artist Little Eva, singer of "The Locomotion." She was the songwriters' babysitter and just happened to be working the day they needed someone to sing on the demo. A little bit of happenstance can go a long way in the recording of a pop classic.

Little Eva's stumble upon glory came to be at the Brill Building. Probably the most famous hit factory of the era, the Brill Building was a place where a record could be written and recorded and sent to the charts in the course of a single day. It gave birth to a ton of stellar 45s, to songs that hold a lasting impression even now, and also gave rise to bubblegum. It was here that Gerry Goffin met Carole King, and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil wrote such hits as "I Love How You Love Me" and "Who Put the Bomp." So magic was the melodic touch of these four, their songs were often exported overseas so rock acts like The Animals could record them. Eric Burdon and the boys had no concerns about people branding them as fake because they took a song like "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" from pop composers—they knew a good tune was a good tune. (Decades later Bon Jovi would rediscover this formula, hiring Max Martin, the Swedish producer behind a lot of the Britney Spears and Backstreet Boys hits, to give them a comeback hit with "It's My Life." A tune is a tune.)

Not one flavor of song, nor one flavor of group.

Don't go kidding yourselves that this music was just some banal moneymaking vehicle, either. Sure, the same period produced hits by folks like The Righteous Brothers that pretty much were all surface—surface polished by feeling, but surface nonetheless. "Unchained Melody" is a lovesong with a tinge of sexual hunger, but it's still primarily a lovesong. The women weren't so shy...but they were more coy. King's "Will

*You Still Love Me Tomorrow?*" was, when broken down, a song sung by a girl about to sleep with her man who was worried that he'd no longer respect her in the morning. The Supremes had "Love Child," which was just what the title suggests—a song about the product of an illicit affair. And let's not even go into the strange politics of the Phil Spector-penned "hit" for The Crystals—"He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)."

And the sexuality wasn't just between the lines of the songs, it was in the presentation, as well. Once again, this set the girl groups apart from their male contemporaries (at least before rock really took hold), and in particular, this was territory pioneered by The Ronettes. No boy wanted to be Bill Medley, but a girl might want to be Ronnie Spector, and while initially the Fab Four were suitable to bring home for milk and cookies, this trio seemed a little more dangerous. Paul McCartney's eyes said, "I'm cute and loveable," but The Ronettes looked like they were more than your average guy could handle. Even the names of some of the bands—The Flirtations, The Exciters, Candy & the Kisses—were saying these girls weren't that innocent long before Britney Spears was around to make the same protest.

It was a revolution of melody. You could be harmonizing on the street corner one day, topping the charts the next. The songs were universal enough to be specific to each person that heard them—which is the essence of pop, and is why the music endures to this day. Contemporary bands continue to find the music of the girl groups and reinterpret it. In recent memory, British rock group Travis recorded a rousing and tender-hearted version of "Be My Baby" for a single B-side (remember those?), and '80s synth-pop duo Erasure, on their 2003 album of covers, *Other People's Songs*, pillaged the Spector discography, most notably on a splendid run-through of The Ronettes classic "Walking in the Rain." (Despite his current legal troubles, Spector's work still retains its stunning genius.) Yeah, sure, we're all cynical and sophisticated and modern, and we think we have all the answers...but a tune is a tune. The power of pop music is to break through all that and remind us of our most basic emotions.

If you ever forget what makes life really important, the reasons that a heart beats inside your chest, all you need to do is remember the girl groups and the people who perfected this insidious method of aural manipulation. Put on "One Fine Day" or "I Hear a Symphony" and let them work their magic.

— Jamie S. Rich,  
wishing he never saw the sunshine  
February, 2003

#### FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION, MAY I RECOMMEND:

- *Phil Spector, Bock To Mono* 4-CD box set (Abko Records, 1991)
- *Girl Groups: Fabulous Females That Rocked the World* by John Clemente (Krause Publications, 2000) – an alphabetical history from the 1950s up through the gorgeous Go-Go's
- *Bubblegum Music Is the Naked Truth*, edited by Kim Cooper and David Smay (Feral House, 2001) – not so much a source of information on girl groups, but it does provide interesting insight on the transition from the classic Brill Building sound to the less substantial bubblegum period, including when the hit factory owned by Don Kirshner was sold to a movie studio, much like *Aben Music in Days Like This*
- <http://www.monn-well.com/thehits.html> - the official website of two of the best Brill Building songwriters
- *The Songmakers* DVD and CD set – A&E Network's excellent documentary on the Brill Building

Jamie S. Rich, in addition to being the editor-in-chief of *Oni Press*, is the writer of the music-inspired novel *Cut My Hair*, as well as a freelance music journalist and the former co-host of Portland, Oregon's premiere cable-access show about British pop music, *@right*. Visit him at [confessions123.com](http://confessions123.com).

# BIOGRAPHY

**J. TORRES** was a long-time comic book fan when he and artist Tim Levins released the debut issue of *The Copybook Tales* in 1996 as part of the burgeoning indie comics scene. Though much more downbeat slice-of-life and autobiographical comics were popular at the time, *The Copybook Tales* earned a dedicated following for its hopeful viewpoint and its take on the average comic book enthusiast's dream of becoming a professional creator. Torres followed this success with an eclectic list of creator-owned projects – like *Sidekicks*; *Alison Dare*, *Little Miss Adventures*; and *Jason & the Argobots* – and freelance gigs – Marvel's *Black Panther* and *X-Men: Ronin*; Tokyopop's *Dragon Hunter*. *The Copybook Tales* has also been collected into book form by Oni Press.



Currently, Torres lives in Toronto where he spends his days writing several upcoming projects, including the second *Jason & the Argobots*, *Sparta*, and *Go Club*, a comic that will reunite him with Tim Levins. His nights are filled with a lot of socializing and trendsetting.



**SCOTT CHANTLER** was born on a frozen February morning in Deep River, Ontario, in 1972 and still hates the cold. After spending most of his childhood in St. Thomas, Ontario – a city best known for having run down Jumbo the elephant with a train – he moved to Waterloo, Ontario, where he studied Fine Arts and Film at the University of Waterloo. During his four years there, he created a popular comic strip for the student newspaper and had his works displayed in the University Gallery. By the time of his graduation in 1995, he had already embarked on a successful career as an illustrator and animator. His work has appeared in magazines, books, comics, and advertising for some of North America's most prestigious corporations. He recently completed his first animated short film, *Gone With the Wind in Sixty Seconds*.

Scott still lives in Waterloo, with his wife Shari and an excitable mutt named Cubby. When he isn't drawing, he enjoys movies, reading, history, canoe trips, poker games, jazz, and the occasional expensive cigar.



# Days Like This™



*“Few comics successfully capture the flavor of the music industry of any era, let alone capture the era itself. Days Like This hits all the high notes.”*

— Jim Johnson, Comics Buyer's Guide

*“Days Like This is a breath of fresh air with its originality and high spirits; Torres and Chantler have created a book that will put a smile on even the grumpiest faces.”*

— Greg McElhattan, iComics.com

*“This sweet story is not to be missed, and it's a sure bet that it'll stand out as one of the best graphic novels of 2003.”*

— Dan MacPherson, TheFourthRail.com

It's the early 1960s and pop music is enjoying a renaissance. Rock 'n' roll and r&b are ushering in a new golden age. At the center of it all is Harmony Plaza, a hit factory full of young songwriters, singers, and producers with a knack for capturing on vinyl some of the tastiest ear candy anyone has ever heard. Enter Anna Solomon, a housewife recently divorced from her music mogul husband, who's starting up a record label of her own. The first act she signs: Tina & the Tiaras, comprised of three golden-voiced teenage girls she recruits at her daughter's high school talent show. Add to the mix the song stylings of fresh-faced tunesmith Karen Prince, and a new chart-topping girl group sound is born. *Days Like This* is the story of seven women making changes in their lives as the times change, beating the odds by dancing to the beat of their own music, and proving the naysayers wrong by doing what feels right to them...

*J. Torres is the acclaimed writer of such diverse titles as The Complete Copybook Tales, Sidekicks: The Transfer Student, and Alison Dare, Little Miss Adventures, among others. Artist Scott Chantler has previously worked on a variety of independent titles, as well as enjoying a successful career as a freelance illustrator and animator. This is their first collaboration.*



RUMOR



ARGET

FEATURE

FEATURE

Field & Stream

Novus  
Year Four

Up to four  
Down for more